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Information Bulletin

*Grade 9 English Language Arts
1996-97*

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	✓ Superintendents

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This bulletin contains general information about the Provincial Student Assessment Program and information specific to the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. **It replaces all previous bulletins.**

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October 1996

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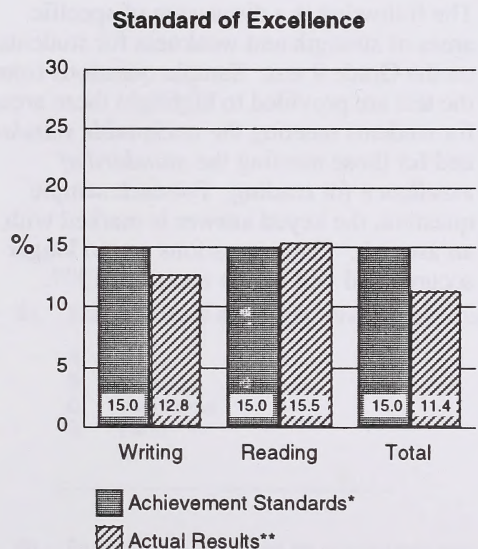
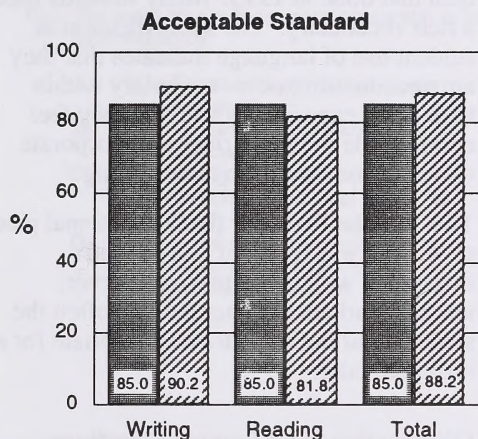
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Looking Back: Highlights of 1996

Grade 9 English Language Arts

This information provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the results for the June 1996 Grade 9 English Language Arts provincial assessment. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.



*the percentage of students in the province expected to meet the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence

** the percentage of students in the province who met the standards (based on those who wrote)

Who Wrote the Test?

All students registered in Grade 9 were expected to write the 1996 English Language Arts Achievement Test. A total of 35 342 students completed the June 1996 assessment. This number reflects an increase of approximately 1 206 students over last years' administration of the test. In 1996, only a small proportion of students in Grade 9 did not write the test: 3.3% of students were absent, 3.0% of students were excused from writing by their superintendent, and an additional 2.3% of students wrote only one part of the test.

What Was the Test Like?

The test had two parts.

Section I of the *Part A: Writing* required students to read short literary selections and then write a narrative or essay in response to some aspect of the readings that was identified in the assignment.

Section II of the *Part A: Writing* assignment required students to write a business letter.

Both pieces of writing were scored in five reporting categories: Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions. Content and Organization were weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the other categories.

Part B: Reading consisted of 55 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections that were either informational or narrative/poetic in nature.

How Well Did Students Do?

As shown in the graphs on the previous page, in writing, 5% more students than expected met the *acceptable standard* but fewer students than expected met the *standard of excellence*. In reading, fewer students than expected met the *acceptable standard*, while the number meeting the *standard of excellence* was in line with provincial expectations. For the total test, fewer students than expected met the *standard of excellence* but more than expected met the *acceptable standard*.

In 19.3% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* for the total test was significantly above provincial expectations. In 68.8% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was not significantly different from provincial expectations. In 11.9% of schools, the percentage of students meeting the *acceptable standard* was significantly below provincial expectations. Schools where fewer than five students wrote the Grade 9 test are not included in these school calculations.

Has Achievement Changed Since Last Year?

More students than last year met both standards for the total test. The area of greatest improvement was in writing at the *acceptable standard*. However, the percentage of students meeting the *standard of excellence* actually declined over last year.

Commentary and Sample Questions from Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test 1996

Observations and Results: Writing

The overall quality of the narrative/essay writing done this year was slightly higher than that done in 1995. Many students used a rich vocabulary. The sophistication in student use of language indicates that they are encountering new vocabulary within their daily experiences and that they feel comfortable in taking risks to incorporate this new vocabulary in their writing.

This was the first year that a functional piece of writing was required and students responded well to the task. However, teacher markers commented that often the students did not use a tone appropriate for a business letter.

Observations and Sample Questions: Reading

The following is a discussion of specific areas of strength and weakness for students on the Grade 9 test. Sample questions from the test are provided to highlight these areas for students meeting the *acceptable standard* and for those meeting the *standard of excellence* for reading. For each sample question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk. These questions are no longer secured and will not be reused in 1997.

6. Throughout most of the story, the narrator is

- A. confident
 - *B. indecisive
 - C. relaxed
 - D. forceful
-

10. The **main** idea in the second paragraph is **best** summed up by

- A. "A major event that spurred clipper development"
- B. "the Far East was fountainhead to a bustling tea trade"
- *C. "Everything conspired to make the dashing clipper the ideal vessel for the times"
- D. "The mood of the competitors was at times closer to hysteria than commercial enthusiasm"

51. The "poor weak dot of light" (line 25) refers to

- A. Ra
 - B. a star
 - C. their home
 - *D. Earth
-

50. From this excerpt, it can be inferred that during the winter

- A. it was very cold
- *B. food was scarce
- C. people did not socialize
- D. their skin stretched and hurt

Acceptable Standard

For **question 6**, students had to locate key character details in the passage. Students who met the *acceptable standard* (86%) but not the *standard of excellence* were able to do this.

In **question 10**, only about 51% of students meeting the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence* were able to draw conclusions by synthesizing pertinent details from a reading selection.

The strengths of students who met the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence* include the ability to

- understand the relationship among details in a reading selection
- identify directly stated details of setting and character
- infer character motivation

However, many of these students did not do as well as expected in

- inferring the meaning of words and phrases from the context of the materials
- making judgements about character motivation by synthesizing information in a reading selection
- judging the author's purpose and theme
- understanding selections that were not narrative in form (particularly poetry and cartoons)

Standard of Excellence

Students meeting the *standard of excellence* had no difficulty with the following questions, which tended to be more difficult for students meeting the *acceptable standard* but not the *standard of excellence*.

Question 51 required students to recognize word connotations beyond their literal meaning. A large percentage (about 97%) of those students meeting the *standard of excellence* answered this question correctly.

Question 50 required students to make an inference by synthesizing key details. Of those students meeting the *standard of*

excellence, about 95% answered this question correctly.

Students who met the *standard of excellence* had very few difficulties with this assessment. These students could

- synthesize information from a selection to make inferences and judgements and to draw conclusions
- recognize the meanings of words and phrases from the context of the material
- make judgements about the author's theme, purpose for writing, and tone
- understand the author's point of view
- understand the selections that were not in narrative form: poems, cartoons, and pamphlets.

Draft and Final Copies

This year, for the first time, students were asked to complete only one copy of their writing. It was suggested that they write on every other line to allow for changes and corrections directly on their work.

Some teachers have concerns that this practice does not respect the writing process. We agree that the complete writing process should be modelled and respected in the classroom. Although a time-limited test situation does not permit the same degree or type of prewriting and revising activities, the achievement testing procedures are designed to reflect the writing process as well.

Students are allowed an opportunity to discuss the writing prompts with classmates in small groups and to plan their writing. Because time is limited, the students are encouraged to spend the majority of their time in composing and revising. We believe that allowing them to do their revising directly on their draft will benefit them, since in the past many students wasted valuable time simply recopying a draft to make it neater; most did not pay special attention to improving the content or quality of what they had originally written.

During the central marking session held in July, most teacher markers were pleasantly surprised at the overall quality and neatness of the students' work. Most agreed that not

having to produce a "good copy" of the writing ensured that the majority of the students had enough time to complete the test.

The practice of requiring only one copy of the writing will continue in 1997.

Two Pieces of Writing

Also for the first time this year, students were required to complete two pieces of writing. Again, some teachers expressed concerns that this was not appropriate.

The two-response format allows students to demonstrate what they know and can do better than a single sample writing test. Since research indicates that students perform differently depending on the type of writing assignment they are doing; a single writing sample may actually be an injustice to students. We believe that it is important to broaden the curriculum base from which we are testing by covering more of the formats in which students are expected to be proficient.

Reporting the Results

On August 23, 1996, each school jurisdiction received, electronically, a district report and individual school reports regarding their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staff (not just teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

Two copies of an individual profile for each student will be sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We expect that the Parent Copy will be given to parents and the School Copy will remain with the student's record.

All Achievement Tests administered in 1993 and prior to 1993 are no longer secured.

Looking Ahead: What is Upcoming for 1997

General Information

The Provincial Student Assessment Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards, which reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

Administering the Assessment

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*, which is mailed each fall to all superintendents and principals.

Schedule

The written-response component of English and French Language Arts will be administered during the last week of May. The machine-scorable component of all achievement tests will be administered during the last two weeks of June. Specific information regarding scheduling is provided in the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

To minimize any risks to security, we recommend that all students complete the test on the same day. Superintendents

approve a local schedule for achievement test administration within the dates provided. Students who are absent when the tests are administered and who return to school by the end of the school year must write the tests upon their return. By scheduling the tests early in the administration period most, if not all, absentees can be tested upon their return to school. The principal is responsible for ensuring the security of the tests.

The tests that will be administered each year are:

Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)

Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Français 6^e année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)
Science (English and French forms)* see p. 6
Social Studies (English and French forms)

Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)
Français 9^e année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)
Mathematics (English and French forms)
Science (English and French forms)
Social Studies (English and French forms)

Students in French Programs

All students in French programs must write English Language Arts, French Language Arts, and French versions of other achievement tests if their language of instruction is French. Alberta Education will send a checklist to schools in January requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-February.

* Resources for the implementation of the revised Program of Studies for elementary science will not be available until the 1997–98 school year. Therefore, implementation of the revised Program of Studies for students in French programs is optional for the 1996–97 school year. Schools offering grade 6 science in French must decide which form of the science test they will write in June 1997. The choices are either the translated form of the 1996 Grade 6 Science Achievement Test based on the previous program or the 1997 Grade 6 Science Achievement Test based on the revised program. Schools offering Grade 6 Science in French must choose one form or the other for all students in Grade 6 writing in French.

Marking Achievement Tests Locally

Teachers are able to mark the tests before returning them to Alberta Education. Teachers can use the results as part of an individual student's year end assessment, as well as for planning instruction.

Performance Assessments

Performance assessments provide students with real-life tasks. These assessments address many of the learner expectations that cannot be easily measured using only paper and pencil strategies. These tasks have been developed by classroom teachers and are designed to model good classroom instruction and assessment practices.

The Student Evaluation Branch uses these tasks to collect a broader base of information about what students know and can do than achievement tests alone can provide. These assessments will be administered to a provincial sample of students in all subjects

on a rotating basis. The following assessments will be given in 1997:

Grade 3

- informational book tasks in language arts

Grade 6

- social studies: inquiry into basic needs

Grade 9

- problem-solving and communication tasks in science

Standards: Curriculum, Assessment, Achievement

The move toward results-based curricula has re-emphasized the need for a clear delineation of standards and their purpose. All standards and all methods of setting standards require judgement.

The process of setting a standard can only be as good as the judgements that go into it. The standard will depend on whose judgements are involved in the process. In this sense, all standards are subjective. Yet once a standard has been set, the decisions based on it can be made objectively. Instead of a separate set of judgements for each test-taker, you will have the same set of judgements applied to all test-takers. Standards cannot be objectively determined, but they can be objectively applied.¹

Definitions

The Achievement Testing Program is directly concerned with three different but related standards. These provincial standards are curriculum standards, assessment standards, and achievement standards. Local targets are also discussed in this section.

¹ Passing Scores; Samuel A. Livingston, Michael J. Zieky; Educational Testing Service, 1982.

- **Curriculum Standards** are the expected student learnings sequenced into grade levels. They include broad statements of knowledge, skills, and attitude expectations against which student performance is judged. These standards are established in the process of curriculum development and are found in the *Program of Studies* document produced for each subject.
- **Assessment Standards** are the criteria adopted for judging actual student achievement relative to curriculum standards. They are ultimately expressed and applied to test scores. They are derived from answers to questions such as: What scores must a student obtain or how many questions on a given test must a student answer correctly in order for his/her performance on the test to be judged as acceptable or excellent?
- **Achievement Standards** are judgements that specify what percentages of students are expected to achieve an acceptable and an excellent level of achievement in relation to each course of studies, i.e., to the relevant curriculum standards. It is important to point out that this judgement is not a prediction of the percentage of students who will actually achieve acceptable or excellent levels, but rather a specification of the percentage of students at a given grade or year in school who are *expected* to achieve the acceptable (85%) or excellent standard (15%). **The 85% of students expected to meet the *acceptable standard* includes those students who meet the *standard of excellence*.** These standards apply to school, jurisdiction, and provincial performance.
- **Local targets** are goals set in schools/districts to focus plans for helping students learn what is expected by the provincial government. These local targets reflect the specific needs of students, the views of teachers, school administration, and the local community, and the resources available to provide learning opportunities for students.

Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process whereby judgements about students' performance on the assessment are made in relation to provincial standards. For more information on the confirming standards process, refer to the *Provincial Student Assessment Program Provincial Report, June 1993*

Administration. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

Purpose of Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students have learned English Language Arts by the end of Grade 9. These standards reflect the essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 9 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education. By comparing actual results with provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is, in fact, “good enough.”

Description of the Language Arts Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 9 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work at the end of the Grade 9 Language Arts program. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured.

Acceptable Standard

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* in Grade 9 English Language Arts are expected to demonstrate sustained interest in reading, viewing, and listening to relatively short, uncomplicated stories, documentaries, and dramatic works.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* should be able to deal with uncomplicated, familiar details and ideas that are directly presented. They should be able to expand in writing the narration of a personal experience and, depending on the context, they should be able to elaborate somewhat on their ideas and sustain a topic for several pages of writing using appropriate but conventional details.

These students are expected to organize concrete, factual materials that contain simple ideas. They should be able to understand more complex techniques of literary structure or organization such as cause and effect, foreshadowing, flashback, and comparison and contrast. On occasion, these students are able to apply that knowledge to unfamiliar literature or apply these techniques in their own writing.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* should be able to analyze and synthesize ideas in a familiar context when the experience is close in time to their own experiences. The expectation is that, unassisted, these students will be successful with conventional tasks, and that with conscious effort and/or assistance, they should be able to complete increasingly complex tasks.

Those students who meet the *acceptable standard* are expected to independently understand, organize, and articulate course-related ideas and concepts in a concrete, direct, personal, and relatively uncomplicated manner. They should be able to read relatively simple short novels, non-fiction selections, and narrative poems, and then clearly and correctly articulate (orally and in writing) the main idea, sequence of events, key details, and features of character and form.

Standard of Excellence

The expectation is that students who meet the *standard of excellence* in Grade 9 English Language Arts are confident learners who read widely (mystery,

romance, adventure, speculative fiction, poetry) and search for information from text.

To meet this standard, students are expected to read, write, and reflect on print and non-print text from many perspectives. They should be able to deal with abstract and complex details and ideas, and readily take risks with unfamiliar material. They should be able to analyze and evaluate ideas received from a wide variety of sources and appreciate how analysis can deepen their appreciation of the work. These students can be expected to express their analysis through a variety of modes (writing, oral presentation, drawing, dramatization) with pertinent, specific, and imaginative detail.

Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able to coherently develop and organize more abstract, complex material. They are expected to establish an appropriate focus for communication and select ideas and language to suit different purposes and audiences. Without teacher assistance, they should be able to identify areas in their own writing that need to be revised and/or elaborated. It is expected that their final products are essentially error-free.

These students should be able to demonstrate interest, enthusiasm, and imagination when dealing with details and ideas that demand complex thought and understanding.

Grade 9 English Language Arts Assessment

The Grade 9 English Language Arts Assessment is composed of two parts.

Part A: Writing consists of two writing assignments designed to be completed in two hours. Included in the total period is time for discussion before the narrative writing, and for the planning, drafting, and revising of both the narrative and functional writing. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

This assessment has two new prompts that are not repeated from previous years.

Part B: Reading (multiple choice) is designed to be completed in 75 minutes. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

Part B: Reading consists of 55 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media. It has two booklets—one containing reading passages and one containing the questions. Answers are to be recorded on a separate machine-scorable answer sheet.

Students may use an English Language or translation or an electronic dictionary and a thesaurus when completing **only Part A: Writing**.

Part A: Writing

Section I of the *Part A: Writing* assignment requires students to read short literary selections and then write a narrative or essay in response to some aspect of the readings that is identified in the assignment.

Section II of the *Part A: Writing* assignment is a functional piece of writing. This assignment requires the students to write for a specific audience and to fulfill a specified purpose within a given context. Specified purposes may include letters of invitation to guest speakers, requests for information, and congratulatory or thank-you letters. This part of the assignment tests students' writing skills by using "real world" situations. As in the narrative assignment, the writers' ability to adjust content, order, tone, and diction to the situation is being tested.

The booklet for *Part A: Writing* Section I includes a page labelled Planning. Students are asked to produce only one copy of their work. They are encouraged to make revisions and corrections directly on this copy. Because of the limited testing time, it is felt that students benefit most from spending the majority of their time in composing and revising their work, rather than perfecting a "good copy." In the past,

when both draft and final copies were required, most students would just recopy their original work, paying special attention to neatness rather than to improving the content or accuracy of what they had originally written. What we now expect is a good first draft from students.

Section II includes a page labelled Planning and two lined pages for a letter, followed by a blank envelope that is to be addressed properly.

Important Information to Note!

At the beginning of the test, students will be given time to discuss both prompts with classmates in groups of two to four, or to think alone about them, and to plan their responses before beginning to write.

In the past, many students have written papers that were "off topic." Please encourage your students to address the prompts. Students who make no attempt to address the prompt will be awarded an **Insufficient**.

Students may do their writing using a word processor. For information about using word-processing technology to complete the written component of the achievement test, see the draft policy in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

The mark for writing is worth 50% of the total mark for Language Arts. Section I, the narrative/essay, is worth approximately 2/3 of the total mark for writing, and Section II, the functional writing assignment, is worth approximately 1/3 of the total writing mark.

Blueprint for Part A: Section 1—Narrative Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A: Section I of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
<p>*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose)</p> <p>The student should be able to respond to a selection of literature and communicate that response appropriately to a specified audience.</p>	<p>The writing assignment is a response to a selection of literature provided in the test booklet. The student may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. The students are to respond in a narrative or essay.</p>	<p>The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:</p>
<p>*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole)</p> <p>The student should be able to organize the response effectively and coherently to produce a unified composition that achieves his/her purpose for writing.</p>		<p>Meets the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.</p>		<p>Approaches the standard of excellence</p>
<p>Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience and to achieve his/her purpose.</p>		<p>Clearly meets the acceptable standard</p>
<p>Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively)</p> <p>The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.</p>		<p>Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard</p>
		<p>Clearly below the acceptable standard</p> <p>INS insufficient</p>

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Blueprint for Part A: Section II—Functional Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A: Section II of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

This is a change from last year where five reporting categories were used to score the functional writing.

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
Content (thought and detail) The student should be able to consider the audience and be able to establish a purpose, incorporating significant information using precise and appropriate details.	The functional writing assignment requires the student to write to a specified audience in the context of a business letter. They are expected to correctly address a blank envelope as well.	The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:
Content Management (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.		Meets the standard of excellence Approaches the standard of excellence Clearly meets the acceptable standard Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard Clearly below the acceptable standard INS insufficient

Content and Content Management are weighted equally.

Marking

Classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using scoring guides like those in this bulletin, before returning materials to Alberta Education. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided with the test materials, to support local marking.

Marks awarded locally can be submitted to Alberta Education and will be used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading. Both marks contribute to the student's final mark. In the case of a discrepancy between these two marks, papers will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. Papers that are not marked locally by teachers are marked centrally, only once.

Papers that are not marked locally by teachers will be marked centrally only once. A small percentage of these papers will be marked a second time for inter-rater reliability.

All papers will be marked centrally in Edmonton in July. The Student Evaluation Branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 175 Grade 9 teachers

selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must be currently teaching Grade 9 Language Arts, have taught it for at least two years, have a permanent Alberta teaching certificate, and be employed by a school jurisdiction at the time of marking. Markers will be contacted in May and the list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15. Group leaders will meet for one day prior to the marking session.

The time allotted for marking is condensed, hence markers are often asked to mark on Saturday and Sunday. The marking floor is open from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and markers are expected to be available to mark during those hours.

Practice Writing Assignments

The sample assignments that follow are similar in format and content to the assignments that will appear on the 1997 Grade 9 English Language Arts *Part A: Writing* component. They appeared on the 1996 Achievement Test. They are no longer secured and may be used for practice with your students. Adequate space for planning and writing will be provided in the writing booklet.

Grade 9 Achievement
English Language Arts
Part A: Writing

Description

- This test consists of **two** sections.
- Before you write, you will have 10 minutes in total for discussion about the prompts in Section I and Section II.
- **Section I** contains some material for you to read and then respond to in writing.
- We suggest that you take about 70 minutes to complete Section I.
- When you have finished Section I, go on to Section II.
- **Section II** describes a situation that you must respond to in letter format.
- We suggest that you take approximately 40 minutes to write the letter.

You have 2 hours to complete this test.
You may take up to an additional 1/2 hour to complete the test, if you need it.

Instructions

- Before beginning to write, you will have 10 minutes to talk with your classmates (in groups of two to four) about the writing assignments, or to think about them alone.
- Jot down your ideas and/or make a plan before you write. Do this on the ***Planning*** page.
- You may use pencil, or blue or black ink to do your writing.
- Write on the lined pages provided. If you write on every other line, it will be easier to make changes to your work.
- You are to do only one copy of your writing. Remember that you may neatly make changes and corrections directly on this writing.
- You may use the following references:
 - a print or electronic dictionary (English language and/or translation)
 - a thesaurus
- Your narrative writing will be evaluated on ***what*** you say and ***how well*** you say it (on **Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions**).
- Your functional writing will be evaluated on ***what*** you say and ***how well*** you say it (on **Content and Content Management**).

Practice Writing Assignment—Narrative Writing

What makes a good friend or friendship? Write a narrative or essay about friends or friendship.

Read and consider the following material, and then complete the writing assignment that follows.

What Are Friends For?

What are friends for, my mother asks
A duty undone, visit missed
casserole unbaked for sick Jane.
Someone has just made her bitter.

Nothing. They are for nothing, friends,
I think. All they do in the end—
they *touch* you. They fill you like music.

Rosellen Brown

Oranges

I peel oranges neatly.
The sections come apart cleanly, perfectly, in my hands.

When Emily peels the orange, she tears holes in it.
Juice squirts in all directions.

“Kate,” she says, “I don’t know how you do it!”

Emily is my best friend.
I hope she never learns how to peel oranges.

Jean Little

Quotes about Friends/Friendship

If you have one true friend, you have more than your share.

Thomas Fuller (1608–1661)

What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.)

True happiness consists not in the multitude of friends, but in the worth and choice.

Ben Jonson (1573–1637)

To have a friend, you must be a friend.

(Anonymous)

What makes a good friend or friendship? Write a narrative or essay about friends or friendship.

Your response should be in the form of a story or essay.

You may draw from:

- your personal experiences
- materials on page 14
- other materials you have read
- television programs you have seen
- class discussions you have had

When writing, **be sure to**:

- **consider** your audience
- **focus** on your purpose
- **organize** your thoughts appropriately in sentences and paragraphs
- **budget** your time
- **proofread** and correct your work directly on your writing

Content

Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a purpose
- chooses ideas
- supports the response
- considers the reader

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and sustained. • The ideas used by the writer are carefully chosen and perceptive. • Supporting details are precise and often creative. • The writing captivates and holds the reader's interest, and is creative and/or original.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and generally sustained. • The ideas used by the writer are thoughtful. • Supporting details are relevant and specific. • The writing engages and holds the reader's interest.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is established but may not be sustained. • The ideas chosen by the writer are appropriate but conventional. • Supporting details are relevant but general. • The writing generally holds the reader's interest.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is vaguely established and may not be sustained. • The ideas chosen by the writer are superficial. • Supporting details are scant and/or vague and/or irrelevant. • The writing does not hold the reader's interest.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose may be unclear; if a purpose is stated or can be implied, it is not sustained. • The ideas chosen by the writer are inappropriate. • Supporting details are irrelevant, inappropriate, and/or lacking. • The writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: *Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.*

Organization

Focus

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writing demonstrates

- focus
- coherent order
- connections between events and/or details
- closure

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is purposeful and interesting, and it clearly establishes an appropriate focus that is sustained throughout. • Events and/or details are arranged in paragraphs, in a purposeful and effective order, and coherence is maintained. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, effectively connect events and/or details within sentences and between paragraphs. • Closure is evident and purposeful.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is purposeful and clearly establishes an appropriate focus that is generally maintained throughout. • Events and/or details are arranged in paragraphs, in a purposeful order, and coherence is generally maintained. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, appropriately connect events and/or details within sentences and between paragraphs. • Closure is appropriate and related to the focus.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is functional and establishes a focus that may be inconsistently maintained. • Events and/or details are arranged in a discernible order, although coherence may falter occasionally. • Transitions tend to be mechanical and may be used inconsistently within sentences and/or between paragraphs. • Closure is related to the focus but may be mechanical and/or artificial.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction may lack purpose and/or may not be functional; any focus established by the writer may not be maintained. • The arrangement of events and/or details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently. • Transitions, within sentences and/or between paragraphs, are lacking or may be inappropriate. • Closure may be unrelated to the focus.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction, if present, is not functional or is inappropriate; no focus is established. • The arrangement of events and/or details is haphazard and incoherent. • Transitions are not used within sentences or between paragraphs. • Closure is inappropriate, unconnected, or missing.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Sentence Structure

Focus

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length
- variety of sentence beginnings

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled. • Sentence type and length are consistently effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are varied.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is controlled. • Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are often varied.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled, but may occasionally impede meaning. • Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and/or varied. • Some variety of sentence beginnings is evident.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure sometimes lacks control, and this can impede the meaning. • Sentence type and length are rarely effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, often impede meaning. • There is little variety of sentence beginnings.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure generally lacks control, and this often impedes meaning. • There is no deliberate variation of sentence type or length; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, severely impede meaning. • There is no variety of sentence beginnings.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Vocabulary

Focus

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider the

- accuracy of the words and expressions selected by the writer
- effectiveness of the words and expressions selected by the writer
- appropriateness and effectiveness of the writer's voice/tone

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used accurately and deliberately to fulfill the writer's purpose. • Specific words and expressions are used to create vivid images and/or enrich details. • The writer's voice/tone is confident, appropriate, and enhances the meaning.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used appropriately and often effectively. • Specific words and expressions show some evidence of careful selection and some awareness of connotative effect. • The writer's voice/tone is clear and appropriate.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are generally used accurately. • General words and expressions are sometimes used when specific words would have been more effective. • The writer's voice/tone is discernible but may be inconsistent or uneven.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific words, if present, are frequently misused. • General, rather than specific, words predominate. • The writer's voice/tone is not clearly established or is inappropriate.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General words that convey only vague meanings are used. • The writer's voice/tone is not evident.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Conventions

Focus

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, indenting for new speakers, etc.) and grammar (agreement of subject–verb/pronoun–antecedent reference, etc.)
- clarity and flow of the communication

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is enhanced because it is essentially error-free. • The relative absence of error is impressive considering the complexity of the response.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is sustained because it contains only minor convention errors. • Any errors that are present do not reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is maintained through generally correct use of conventions. • Errors that are present may reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is weakened by the frequently incorrect use of conventions. • Many of these errors reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is limited by the consistently incorrect use of conventions. • These errors severely reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of communication.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Practice Writing Assignment—Functional Writing

Imagine that you are a member of a committee that is planning Career Day for the Grade 9 students of your school, Frazervale Junior High. As a member of this committee, you are responsible for inviting Dr. Pat Smith, a veterinarian, to be a guest speaker on Career Day, June 14, 1996.

ASSIGNMENT

Write a letter to Dr. Pat Smith. Amongst other details, be sure to:

- request that Dr. Smith discuss various aspects of this career (job description, personal qualities needed, education required, salary, benefits, etc.)
- include the number of students who will be present, the time Dr. Smith should arrive at the school, where Dr. Smith should go upon arrival, and the amount of time Dr. Smith will have to speak to students
- mention that lunch will be provided for guest speakers
- request that Dr. Smith reply to you at the school
- sign your letter Kelly Brown—**do not sign your own name**

Correctly address the envelope outline provided on page 22, using the addresses below.

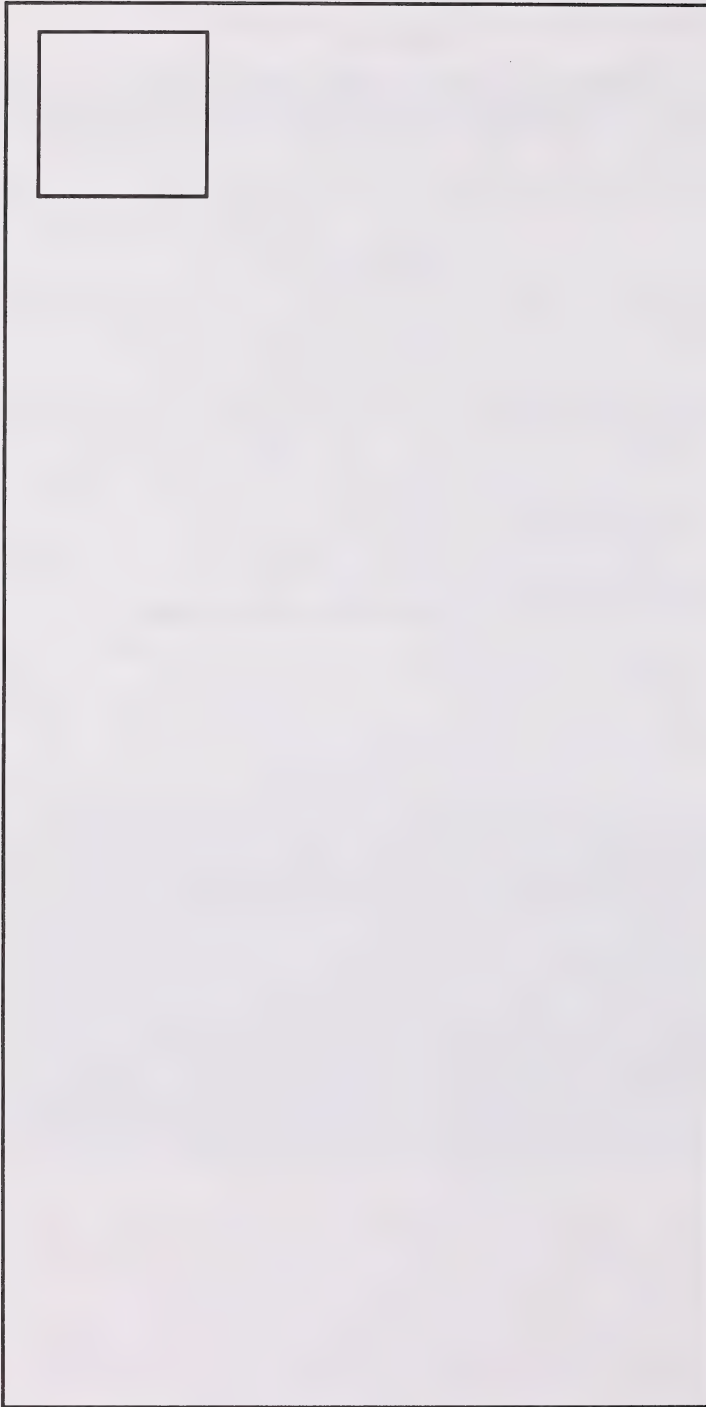
School Address

123 Main Street North, Bridgeport, Alberta T2H 3Z4

Veterinary Clinic

6006-3 Avenue, Simmondsdale, Alberta T1A 1B1

ENVELOPE



Content

Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 9 functional writing, the marker should consider

- the effectiveness of development
- how the purpose is fulfilled with complete and appropriate information
- appropriateness of tone (awareness of audience)

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of topic or function is clearly focused and effective. • Complete information is presented, and this information is enhanced by precise and appropriate details that effectively fulfill the purpose. • A tone appropriate for the addressee is clearly and effectively maintained.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of topic or function is generally focused and effective. • Complete information is presented, and this information is substantiated by appropriate details that fulfill the purpose. • A tone appropriate for the addressee is clearly maintained.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of topic or function is adequate. • Sufficient information is given, and this information is supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose. • A tone appropriate for the addressee is generally maintained.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of topic or function is vaguely focused and ineffective. • Essential information may be missing. Supporting details are scant, insignificant, and/or irrelevant. The purpose is only partially fulfilled. • A tone appropriate for the addressee is evident but not maintained.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of topic or function, if present, is inadequate. • Essential information and supporting details are inappropriate or lacking. The purpose is not fulfilled. • Little awareness of tone appropriate for the addressee is evident.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment, or the writing is so deficient in length that it is not possible to assess content.

Note: *Content and Content Management are equally weighted.*

Please advise students that they must attempt to address the assignment. Those letters that are completely “off topic” will be awarded an Insufficient.

Content Management

Focus

When marking **CONTENT MANAGEMENT** appropriate for Grade 9 functional writing, the marker should consider

- accuracy and effectiveness of words/phrases and expressions (as appropriate for a business letter)
- control of sentence structures, usage, grammar, and mechanics
- consistent application of format for business letter/envelope

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are consistently accurate and effective. • The writing demonstrates confident and consistent control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. • The letter/envelope are essentially free from format errors and/or omissions.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are usually accurate and effective. • The writing demonstrates competent and generally consistent control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. • The letter/envelope contain few format errors and/or omissions.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are generally accurate and appropriate. • The writing demonstrates basic control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Errors may occasionally impede meaning. • The letter/envelope contain occasional format errors and/or omissions.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are frequently inappropriate and/or ineffective. • The writing demonstrates faltering control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Errors impede meaning. • The letter/envelope contain frequent format errors and/or omissions.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection and use of words/phrases and expressions are misused and/or ineffective. • The writing demonstrates lack of control of sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Errors severely impede meaning. • The letter/envelope contain numerous and glaring format errors and/or omissions.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test requires students to read selections that include a variety of informational and narrative/poetic texts with implicit ideas and details. The content of these selections is often abstract and may be unfamiliar or specialized. After reading these selections, students answer 55 multiple-choice questions based on the readings.

The practice questions on pages 27 to 37 appeared on the June 1996 Achievement Test (all other questions on this test are secured). These released questions, along with questions from previous bulletins, can be used to prepare students for the current Achievement Test.

These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of those that will appear on the 1997 test, although the emphasis may be slightly different. The blueprint showing the approximate number of questions in each category appears on the next page.

Development

Reading selections are chosen according to the following general guidelines:

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 9 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 9 students.
- Canadian content should be used extensively.

The following considerations guided question development:

- Questions relating to each reading selection should be arranged from specific to general, wherever practical.
- Questions should test the student's ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.

Reading Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified. The number of questions in each category is approximate.

Part B: Reading Grade 9 Language Arts Achievement Test

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to construct meaning by attending to and interpreting ideas/details related to format cues and character (actions, motives, and values), setting, events, and conflict.	4	8	12	22
Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to demonstrate an understanding of literary forms and of the relationship between the author's intention and point of view and choice of form and writing style, and choice of organizational methods such as chronological order, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, foreshadowing, and flashback.	5	10	15	27
Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, understand the denotations and connotations of words and expressions, and determine the meaning and effect of figurative language.	3	8	11	20
Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and/or predict plausible outcomes by synthesizing information from an entire reading selection.	5	12	17	31
Total Number of Questions	17	38	55	100
Percent of Test	31	69	100	100

Practice Reading Questions

- I. Sometimes, trying to start a new relationship can be a difficult experience. Read how one young man managed this challenge in “The Phone Call” and answer questions 1 to 8.

THE PHONE CALL

- “Hello?”
“Hello, Noreen. Guess who this is.”
No, that wouldn’t work. That’s too childish. I want her to think I’m mature.
Besides, what if she guesses wrong? I’ll have to try something else.
- 5 “Hello?”
“Hello. Is Noreen there?”
That’s no good, either. What if her mother answered? I’d want her to think I’m polite. Let’s see.
“Hello, may I please speak to Noreen?”
- 10 “This is Noreen.”
“Hi, Noreen. This is Sam.”
“Sam? Sam who?”
Sam who? She’s got to know who I am. I mean, she’s new at school, but she’s been here a month now, and we’re in the same homeroom and the same
15 biology class. Besides, I’m the only guy in homeroom on the junior football team. She’s got to know who I am. But what if she doesn’t? Let’s see.
“Hello, Noreen. This is Sam Jenkins.”
“Sam who?”
“Sam Jenkins. We’re in the same homeroom. I sit near the windows. Mr.
20 Mickle always makes me empty the wastebasket for him every morning.”
“Oh, hi, Sam. How are you?”
“Great, thanks. How are you?”
Wait. If I say I’m great, will she think I’m stuck up? I don’t want her to think I’m stuck up. I’m fine. That’s it. I’ll say I’m fine. No, that’s too dull, boring.
25 Most people say they’re fine. I have to say something original. I’ll say I’m . . . smooth. No, that’s too cool, and I’m not that cool. I need something more natural, more like me.
Nervous, that’s it. I’ll tell her I’ve never called up a girl before, and I’m nervous. She’ll appreciate my honesty, and she’ll feel so sorry for me that she’ll
30 be really nice. No, that’s pity, and I don’t want pity. If I’m going to ask her to this dance, I’ve got to be confident. I have to act as if I know what I’m doing. I’ll say I’m . . . okay. Yeah, that’s it for sure. I’m okay—not too cool and not conceited.
“I’m okay, Noreen.”
- 35 All right, what’s next? Do I ask her out right away, or do I make small talk? If I ask her out right away, maybe I’ll seem too anxious, too desperate. I need

Continued

something else. Let's see.

"Noreen, do you know what the homework is for biology tomorrow?"

40 Biology. Should I ask about biology, or will she think I'm a nerd? I don't know. She's pretty smart, and she might think I'm the intellectual type if I ask her about schoolwork. It will show that I'm serious about my education. But if I'm serious about my education, why don't I have the biology assignment?

Football. I'll ask her if she's going to the game on Saturday. No, I can't do that. I can't say anything about the game until I ask her to the Graduation Dance.
45 If she says no to that, I can forget about taking her to the game. If she says no, what do I do then? Do I hang up? Do I tell her to take a hike?

Ah, she won't say no. She's too new. She doesn't know anybody yet. Even if she doesn't want to go out with me, she'll say yes, and once she says yes, once she gets to know me, she'll be in love. She'll want me to sit with her at lunch.
50 She'll come to the football games to watch me play, and she'll hang around afterward and wait for me. Yeah, she'll definitely say yes. She's got to.

Okay, forget football. How about this?

"Noreen, I was wondering if you could recommend a good book for me for my book report."

55 That's perfect. She's always reading some kind of paperback book in homeroom, and I've seen her in the library a lot. Yeah, I'll ask her to give me some ideas. We'll discuss books for a while. Then I'll switch the conversation over to movies, where I'll be more at home.

All right, books, movies . . . then what? I wonder if I should write all this
60 down so I won't forget. Nah, that's stupid. I'll wing it. I'll be all right. Okay, after the small talk I'll ask her to the dance.

"Noreen, how would you like to share an evening in paradise with me?"

No, I'm just kidding. I've got to relax.

65 "Noreen, I was wondering if you'd like to go to the Graduation Dance with me."

I was wondering. That's the same thing I said about the book report. No, I've got to come up with something better.

"Noreen, what are you doing Friday night?"

70 Nope, that's not very cool. I saw that in "Dear Abby." You can't beat around the bush. You've got to come right out with it.

"Noreen, would you like to go to the Graduation Dance with me?"

"Oh, Sam, I'd love to. I was hoping you'd ask me."

Once she says yes, I can relax. Then we can talk about anything. I'll call her every night. We'll go out every weekend. She'll invite me over for dinner.

75 Okay, here goes. Relax. Dial her number. That's right. Now remember what you have to say.

"Hello, may I please speak to Noreen?"

"I'm sorry. Noreen just went to bed. You'll have to call back tomorrow."

Jim LaBate

1. To “wing it” (line 60) means to act
 - A. decisively
 - B. spontaneously
 - C. immediately
 - D. intelligently
2. The mood of the narrator before placing the phone call is one of
 - A. nervousness
 - B. confidence
 - C. frustration
 - D. satisfaction
3. The narrator’s **internal** conflict is shown through his
 - A. actual words
 - B. body language
 - C. thought processes
 - D. nervous actions
4. Which question seems artificial for this narrator?
 - A. “Noreen, do you know what the homework is for biology tomorrow?”
 - B. “Noreen, how would you like to share an evening in paradise with me?”
 - C. “Noreen, what are you doing Friday night?”
 - D. “Noreen, would you like to go to the Graduation Dance with me?”
5. The irony in this story comes from the author’s use of
 - A. foreshadowing
 - B. a sarcastic tone
 - C. flashback
 - D. a surprise ending
6. Throughout most of the story, the narrator is
 - A. confident
 - B. indecisive
 - C. relaxed
 - D. forceful

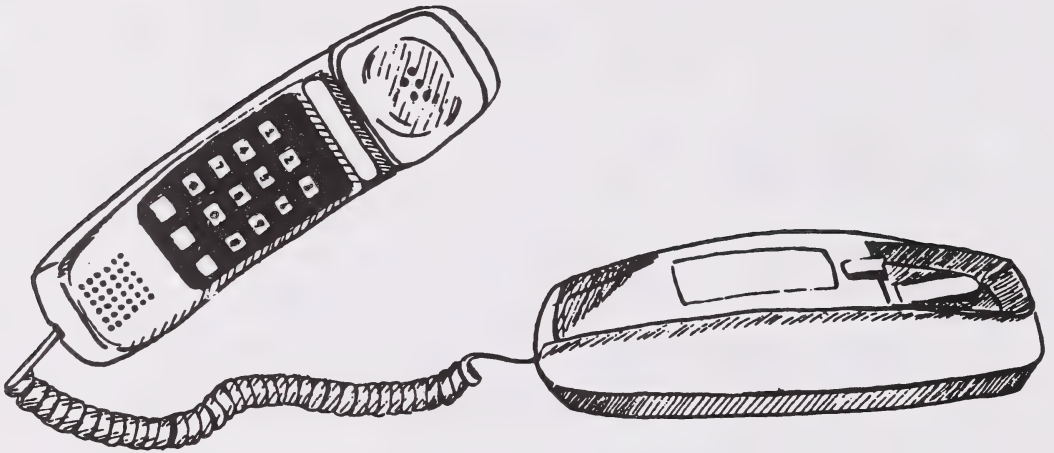
Continued

7. The author's style is shown through

- A. character description
- B. colourful vocabulary
- C. imaginary dialogue
- D. setting details

8. The author's purpose is to

- A. entertain
- B. inform
- C. persuade
- D. instruct



II. Read “The Clippers” and answer questions 9 to 13.

THE CLIPPERS

—from *The Romance of Sail*

The clippers, the most dramatic of the sailing breed, were of a multiplicity of types and rigs. An early version was the three-masted Baltimore clipper: later came the Blackwell frigates, tall barques, schooners and full-rigged ships. One factor, though, singles out the archetypal clipper—its long, narrow, racing lines.

- 5 For the clippers depended on speed above all else, even cargo capacity, for their success. Literally, they “clipped” the wind. If a clipper was to be profitable, it had to be faster than its competitors, which by the 1850s included power-ships of increasing reliability and greater capacity.

- A major event that spurred clipper development came in 1849 when the
10 British Navigation Acts were repealed, so opening up a previously closed-shop trade to all comers. The Americans were quick to assert their interest, and the efficiency of their merchantmen was soon a byword. The year 1849 was also the year of the California gold rush, when it seemed there were never enough ships to carry gold-crazed speculators to San Francisco. Meanwhile, the Far East was
15 fountainhead to a bustling tea trade as well as a less creditable traffic in opium; and, at the same time, the Australian wool trade was expanding. Everything conspired to make the dashing clipper the ideal vessel for the times—so long as it could keep up its own searing pace . . . 97 days from Hong Kong to London; Melbourne to Liverpool in 63 days; Newcastle, New South Wales to Shanghai in
20 28 days; Foochow to Gravesend, against the monsoon, in 91 days; Boston Light to Liverpool in 13 days, 19 and 1/2 hours; 702 kilometres in a day’s run. The mood of the competitors was at times closer to hysteria than commercial enthusiasm, and no ships were driven harder than the clippers; many were commanded by rampaging captains and sadistic mates, suitably named Bully This and Bully That.
25 In the end, it was the desperate search for extra speed that undermined the clippers’ position and hastened their demise. To achieve a faster shape, their lines were progressively reduced until they had become overbred for their function: eventually too narrow to carry enough wool or tea for the prices their owners could get, they found their market deserting them. There was no scope for a
30 comeback; the march of steam was irreversible. And so the slender “China birds,” the “ghosts,” as they had been known in their prime, slid away to extinction.

Michael Leitch

9. The **main** purpose of the first paragraph is to
- A. argue the strengths of the clipper
 - B. contrast clippers and steamships
 - C. introduce the clipper
 - D. list the kinds of clippers
10. The **main** idea in the second paragraph is **best** summed up by
- A. "A major event that spurred clipper development"
 - B. "the Far East was fountainhead to a bustling tea trade"
 - C. "Everything conspired to make the dashing clipper the ideal vessel for the times"
 - D. "The mood of the competitors was at times closer to hysteria than commercial enthusiasm"
11. The author believes that if cargo space had not been sacrificed for speed, the
- A. clipper might still be in use today
 - B. clipper's life span would have been no different
 - C. clipper's decline would have been more rapid
 - D. clipper might have lasted longer
12. At the height of clipper popularity, the **most** important factor about a clipper was its
- A. passenger capacity
 - B. speed
 - C. cargo capacity
 - D. reliability
13. The word "demise" as used in line 26 means
- A. unpopularity
 - B. beginning
 - C. end
 - D. popularity

III. Read the excerpt from *The Guardian of Isis* and answer questions 14 to 21.

THE GUARDIAN OF ISIS

Jody stared at her. He had never really noticed her before. She was a very pretty girl, with black hair in two very long plaits, and brown eyes, very big in a face dusted with freckles. Her blatant admiration warmed him inside. He stuffed another juicy collop of roast meat into his mouth and began to tell her about all the ideas he had had, ideas that had come to nothing because nobody had cared. She
5 listened to him, her eyes wide with admiration, looking down only for more food.

Around them the other eight hundred and twenty-seven inhabitants of Isis ate and drank and laughed, filling the bellies that had shrunk during the long winter's fast until they could feel the skin stretch and hurt. As they ate, Ra's light faded
10 and the sky slowly darkened from green to the blackness of deep space.

Voices became lower. Conversations trailed off unfinished. Greasy mouths and fingers were wiped. Every eye was fixed on the western horizon, as the stars slowly popped out of the darkness like fireflies.

The western rim of the mountains that enclosed the Valley hid the true
15 horizon, but there was a cleft between two peaks, like a child's toothless gap; and it was on this gap that every eye was fixed. Two stars appeared close together, white, not very bright. The people watched in silence. At length, as it grew even darker, a third star appeared, making a small triangle point down in the gap between the far peaks. Earth! There was a cheer from everyone but the babies,
20 who had long ago fallen asleep on the grass, gluttoned with food.

Earth! Small, reddish-gold, quite insignificant in a sky that was by now fully jewelled in magnificence. Jody stared up at the tiny point of light. Could it really be true that his very own grandparents, and all the other Councillors and elders, had travelled through the unknowable emptinesses of dark space from that tiny
25 point of light? Could that poor weak dot of light really have been a place to live, a place called Home? Of all the legends and stories that the Council told, . . . this one was the hardest to swallow.

Monica Hughes

14. The word “plaits” (line 2) means
- A. folds
 - B. waves
 - C. curves
 - D. braids
15. The sentence “Her blatant admiration warmed him inside” (line 3) suggests that Jody felt
- A. embarrassed
 - B. nervous
 - C. pleased
 - D. important
16. From this excerpt, it can be inferred that during the winter
- A. it was very cold
 - B. food was scarce
 - C. people did not socialize
 - D. their skin stretched and hurt
17. The “poor weak dot of light” (line 25) refers to
- A. Ra
 - B. a star
 - C. their home
 - D. Earth
18. Jody had a difficult time believing that
- A. his ancestors were from Earth
 - B. Earth was small and reddish-gold
 - C. the Councillors told legends
 - D. he had been born on Isis
19. According to the details in this excerpt, Isis was
- A. a star
 - B. inhabited by settlers from Earth
 - C. close to Earth
 - D. overseen by a Guardian

Continued

20. This excerpt is an example of

- A. science fiction
- B. mystery
- C. historical fiction
- D. mythology

21. The inhabitants of Isis were **probably** celebrating

- A. the arrival of another group of inhabitants
- B. some of the councillors and elders arriving from Home
- C. Earth's appearance signaling the end of a long harsh winter
- D. Ra's disappearance

IV. Read the consumer information pamphlet "Look Who's Stealing Your Electricity" and answer questions 22 and 23.

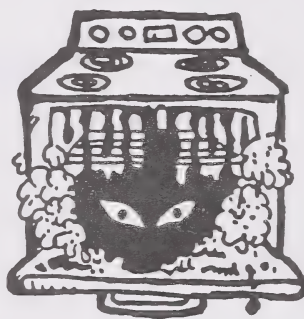
LOOK WHO'S STEALING YOUR ELECTRICITY

Take the \$2 bill test

Your refrigerator and oven use a lot of electricity and they can waste a lot too if they don't close properly. Shut the door of each appliance on a \$2 bill. If the bill pulls out easily, cold or hot air can flow out too, adding to your energy costs. The fridge may need a new gasket or the solution may be as simple as making sure the refrigerator is level. You may need to align the oven door, fix the hinges, or replace the gasket. Take the \$2 bill test and don't spend energy dollars you don't have to.



Heavy dust on the refrigerator's coils makes it work harder to keep its cool. A quick vacuuming of the coils behind or underneath the refrigerator can help your fridge last longer and it won't use more energy than it has to. (P.S. The ideal fridge temperature is 3° Celsius.)



Pots and pans that are battered and bent on the bottom, or have a heavy buildup of burnt-on black, use more energy to heat up than flat-bottomed, clean utensils. Tight-fitting lids, and burners that are the same size or smaller than the pot, also help stop energy waste.

Grease and burnt-on food really reduce your oven's efficiency. A clean oven works better and uses less electricity. Try putting tin foil on the oven bottom. It catches bits of food and grease for easy cleaning and it's a good reflector too.



Tune-up, Clean up

It's simple. Clean and well-cared-for appliances last longer and they use less electricity. Over the long run, you can save money on appliance replacement. And of course, the less energy you waste, the more dollars you save.

22. A two-dollar bill is suggested for the test because
- A. it associates energy saving with money saving
 - B. the one-dollar coin is too thick
 - C. this is approximately the amount one can save in a month
 - D. it blows out easily if air is escaping
23. This consumer information pamphlet was **most likely** published to
- A. teach us how to test our appliances
 - B. encourage us to use less energy
 - C. force us to think about how we use appliances
 - D. aid us in prolonging the life of our appliances

Key and Descriptors for Practice Reading Questions

Ques.	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard
1	B	Narrative/Poetic	Associating meaning	Recognize word connotations beyond their literal meaning
2	A	Narrative/Poetic	Main ideas/details	Interpret details and changing character mood
3	C	Narrative/Poetic	Main ideas/details	Interpret details of character action and values
4	C	Narrative/Poetic	Synthesizing	Make a judgement about character motivation by synthesizing information
5	D	Narrative/Poetic	Organization of ideas	Evaluate the relationship between the irony and the techniques chosen by the author
6	B	Narrative/Poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of character
7	C	Narrative/Poetic	Synthesizing	Evaluate the relationship between the technique chosen by the author and his/her style
8	A	Narrative/Poetic	Synthesizing	Judge the author's purpose
9	B	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Judge the purpose of the introduction
10	C	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion about specific parts of a passage
11	D	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion by relating what he/she knows to new information in a concrete poem
12	B	Informational	Main ideas/details	Understand the relationship among details
13	C	Informational	Associating meaning	Infer the meaning of a word from its context
14	D	Narrative/Poetic	Associating meaning	Recognize word connotations beyond their literal meaning
15	C	Narrative/Poetic	Associating meaning	Recognize word connotations beyond their literal meaning
16	B	Narrative/Poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Make an inference by synthesizing key details
17	D	Narrative/Poetic	Associating meaning	Recognize word connotations beyond their literal meaning
18	A	Narrative/Poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details
19	B	Narrative/Poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details
20	A	Narrative/Poetic	Organization of ideas	Understand the author's use of particular form
21	C	Narrative/Poetic	Synthesizing	Judge character motivation by synthesizing key information
22	A	Informational	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information
23	B	Informational	Synthesizing	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information

Preparing Students for the Assessment

The best way to prepare students for the achievement tests is to teach the curriculum well and to ensure that children know what is expected. Many of the skills and attitudes that support test writing are in fact good skills and strategies for approaching all kinds of learning tasks.

Teachers are also encouraged to share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

Have students do the practice questions included in this bulletin. Then, have students share strategies they used to answer the questions.

In 1991 and 1995, the Student Evaluation Branch published documents entitled *Samples of Students' Writing*. These samples came from the student responses given on the 1990 and 1994 Language Arts Achievement Tests. Share these samples and the accompanying commentaries with students.

Also, familiarize students with the scoring guides in this bulletin. With instruction, students may be able to use these guides effectively when evaluating their own writing or that of peers.

Part A: Writing

Have students:

Plan their available time carefully. We suggest that they use all the time available to them to carefully *read* the assignment and *think* about what they are being asked to do, to *plan* their writing so that it is focused, unified, and coherent, and to *proofread* their writing. They will have two hours to complete the assignments.

Read all the instructions carefully and do what the assignments ask them to do. The time they spend in reading and thinking about the assignments is time well spent. Many students find that highlighting or underlining key words in the assignments helps them to focus on what is expected.

Plan their writing using the pages provided. They should choose a planning strategy that helps them to focus their ideas. They may want to try

- webbing
- using a chart
- listing (main ideas, character, etc.)
- using a plot outline (diagram)
- using a RAFTS model (role, audience, focus, topic, strong verb)

Use their reference materials. They are allowed the use of a dictionary and a thesaurus when writing Part A. Students should use a dictionary to look up the meanings of words that they want to use but are not completely sure about and to ensure that they spell words correctly. A thesaurus can be useful if they need to find a more precise word for the context they are developing, but students should be careful not to overuse a thesaurus.

Keep in mind the characteristics of effective writing.

- Awareness of audience (appropriateness of tone and use of correct language)
- Completeness of information (enough detail to fulfill purpose)
- Relevance of information (all details pertain to the purpose)
- Clarity of information (all details are specific and easily understood by the reader)

Proofread their work and correct errors directly on their first draft. Students should double-space, if they think it will allow them to make corrections more easily.

Part B: Reading

Have students:

Read the material using the strategy that works best for them. They should either

- read the selection and think carefully about it before they try any of the multiple-choice questions associated with the reading selection OR
- read the questions first and then read the selection, keeping in mind the questions they will need to answer

Each set of multiple-choice questions is designed to take them back through the reading selection in a certain way. The questions are ordered according to the location of the answers in the passage. For example, the answer to the first question will likely appear near the beginning of the passage, and so on. Questions relating to the reading selection as a whole will appear at the end of the set of questions.

Consider all forms of information provided. Information will be presented not only in words but also in visual forms such as cartoons, pictures, or charts.

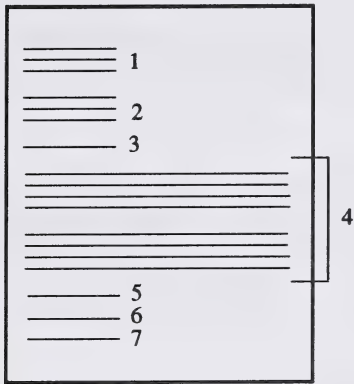
Take the time to reread the lines that are referred to in a question. Many questions

contain quotations from the selection with line references indicated. It is always worthwhile to reread the lines that are referenced and consider the meanings of these lines in both their immediate context in the selection and the context of the selection as a whole.

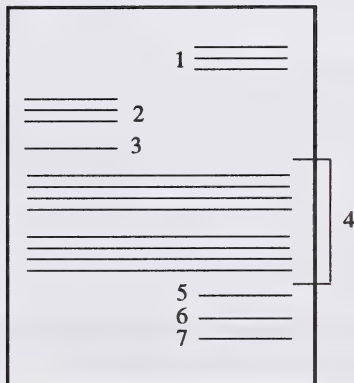
Read carefully all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that they think is best. Some of the questions are designed to test their ability to make a judgement. These questions will often include a bold-faced qualifier in their stems, such as **best**, **most strongly**, or **most clearly**. All of the alternatives (A, B, C, and D) are, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the reading selection into account or can be supported most strongly by reference to the reading selection.

Work from partial knowledge when it is appropriate to do so. If a correct or best answer does not become obvious to them fairly quickly, they may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use their judgement to select an answer from those that remain.

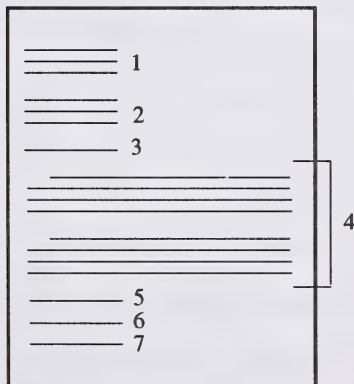
Three Business Letter Formats



The block format. In this format, all parts of the letter run along the left side of the page (margin). No paragraphs in the body are indented, but an extra space is left between paragraphs.



The modified block format. In this format, the heading and the closing and signature run along the right margin. All the other parts run along the left margin.



The semiblock format. This format is the same as the block format, except that the paragraphs in the body are indented.

Format of a Business Letter

There are three basic business letter formats. Any of these formats is appropriate and acceptable for the test. What is most important is that students choose one format and use it consistently.

Parts of the Business Letter (see previous page)

1. Heading

The heading consists of your address and the date.

501 Spring Street
Regina SK R3T 4N7
January 3, 1997

2. Inside Address

The inside address consists of the name and address of the person to whom you are writing. It usually appears four lines below the heading if a word processor is used, or one line below if it is hand-written.

Sam Hunt, Director
The Knitting Mill
1409 3 Avenue
Toronto ON L3V 7O1

3. Salutation

The most traditional salutation or greeting for a business letter is *Dear* followed by Mr., Ms., Mrs., or Miss and the person's last name, and ending with a colon.

Dear Mr. Smith:
Dear Ms. Black:
Dear Mrs. Brown:
Dear Miss Green:

4. Body

The body is the main part of the letter in which you write what you have to say to the person. Skip one line after the salutation.

- Get to the point. However, ensure that sufficient information is given so that your purpose is clearly understood.
- Business letters are usually formal, so the language that you use should also be formal.

5. Closing

The closing is the ending to your letter. It appears at the bottom of the letter, directly under the body. Only the first word in the closing should be capitalized. It is always followed by a comma.

Yours truly,
Sincerely,

6. Signature

The signature is your full name signed. Your signature should appear directly below the closing. It should always be written in ink.

7. Your name printed

8. Commonly Used Abbreviations for Provinces and Territories

Province	Symbol
Alberta	AB
British Columbia	BC
Manitoba	MB
New Brunswick	NB
Newfoundland	NF
Northwest Territories	NT
Nova Scotia	NS
Ontario	ON
Prince Edward Island	PE
Quebec	QC or PQ
Saskatchewan	SK
Yukon	YT

Addressing an Envelope

The diagram shows a rectangular envelope with a dashed line indicating the fold. On the top left, there are three horizontal lines for the return address, preceded by a circled number 1. In the center, there are four horizontal lines for the mailing address, preceded by a circled number 2.

1. Return Address

The return address is the name and address of the person sending the letter. The return address appears in the top left corner of the envelope and consists of your name, street address, city or town, province, and postal code.

JEAN BROWN
13 SPRING RD
TORONTO ON L2R 3V6

2. Mailing Address

The mailing address is the name and address to which the letter is being sent. It always appears in the centre of the envelope. In a business letter, the address on the envelope is the same as the inside address of the letter. There may be separate lines for the title of the addressee (Editor, Director, President), the division or department the person works in, and the name of his or her company, business, or organization.

SAM HUNT
DIRECTOR
THE KNITTING MILL
1403 3 AVE
TORONTO ON L3V 7O1

The following points are taken from the *Canadian Addressing Standards* document:

1. Addresses should be typed or written in upper case or block letters.
2. All lines of the address must be formatted with a uniform left margin.
3. Punctuation marks (commas, periods, etc.) should not be used unless they are part of a place name (e.g., ST. JOHN'S).
4. The postal code should always appear on the same line as the municipality and province name and be separated from the province by two spaces.
5. The two-letter symbol for the province name should be used wherever possible (see previous page).
6. The return address should be formatted in the same way as the main address.

Credits

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